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TWELVE INDICTED IN NATIONWIDE DRUG CONSPIRACY; 38 KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE AND NEARLY \$1.5 MILLION DRUG-RELATED CASH SEIZED TO DATE

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, DEA Special Agent in Charge, San Francisco Field Division Javier Pena, California Department of Justice, Director of Law Enforcement Rick Oules, and IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge Roger L. Wirth announced today that SERGIO REYNOL PADILLA, aka Sergio Reynol Padilla-Gonzalez, 39, MONICA PADILLA, 29, LORENA PEREZ, 37, GERARDO VARGAS GALICIA, 37, GILBERT FRANKLIN, 32, all of Merced, TRINIDAD ANGULO, 39, of Madera, WAYNE BRIZAN, aka Cornelius JAMES, aka Mark BRIZAN, aka Anthony WILKINS, 37, of Davie, Florida, PHILIP BRIZAN, 40, FRANCHESKA BRIZAN, 37, both of Atwater, JUDE BRIZAN, 42, of Modesto, DAMON GUNN, 31, of Turlock, and HOWARD GORDON, JR., 30, of Los Angeles, California were indicted today in connection with a major cocaine distribution operation based in the Central Valley of California. The 23-count federal indictment charges the defendants with drug, money laundering, and false currency transaction report offenses.

The indictment is the product of a long-term Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation conducted by the DEA, California Department of Justice, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, and the IRS with the assistance of numerous state and local law enforcement agencies. During the investigation, agents seized approximately 38 kilograms, or about 77 pounds of cocaine and nearly \$1.5 million in U.S. currency. In addition, forfeiture proceedings have been instituted against three homes owned by SERGIO PADILLA, his wife, MONICA PADILLA, and his sister, LORENA PEREZ which were used to facilitate drug trafficking offenses or were purchased with drug proceeds.

According to court documents, SERGIO PADILLA and PHILIP and WAYNE BRIZAN headed a nationwide drug distribution conspiracy. For at least six years, PADILLA, a convicted drug felon and cocaine wholesaler, directed the shipment and distribution of large quantities of cocaine throughout the United States. Brothers WAYNE, PHILIP, and JUDE BRIZAN, who are originally from Grenada, were responsible for coordinating and transporting large amounts of cocaine obtained from PADILLA to the East Coast, primarily the Philadelphia area where the cocaine was distributed to violent gang members. The brothers shipped the cocaine in semi-tractor trailers containing partially legitimate loads of agricultural produce.

United States Attorney Scott stated, "This wide ranging investigation exemplifies federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies sharing resources and working together to combat high-level drug trafficking and crime in the Central Valley and throughout the United States."

"We will leave no stone unturned when looking for illegal drugs, including all assets. These indictments and the millions seized demonstrate our commitment to dismantle drug organizations from the top to bottom," said DEA Special Agent in Charge Pena.

"The federal indictment of Sergio Padilla and the other co-conspirators epitomizes the collaborated efforts of the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies working together in a partnership and keeping 38 Kilograms of Cocaine off of the streets. These arrests should send a message to all drug trafficking organizations that they will not be tolerated and law enforcement will always be committed in a united effort to diminish their threat in our communities," said California Department of Justice, Director of Law Enforcement Rick Oules.

According to IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge, Roger L. Wirth, "Drug dealers, like many other criminals, are largely motivated by greed and financial gain. IRS Criminal Investigation's unique role and expertise is in following the money trail left by drug dealers to discover and seize their illicit profits and thereby assist in disrupting and dismantling their criminal organizations. This investigative attack on money laundering is an essential element in the war on narcotics."

According to Assistant United States Attorney Karen Escobar, who is prosecuting the case, all defendants, except SERGIO PADILLA, face a mandatory minimum prison term of 10 years and a maximum term of life, along with a maximum fine of \$4 million, if convicted of the drug trafficking offenses. PADILLA faces a mandatory minimum prison term of 20 years and a maximum life term, if convicted of the drug charges filed against him. MONICA PADILLA and SERGIO PADILLA, who are charged with the financial crimes, face a maximum prison term of twenty years and a fine of up to \$500,000, if convicted.

SERGIO PADILLA, the BRIZAN brothers, LORENA PEREZ, GILBERT FRANKLIN, TRINIDAD ANGULO, and GERARDO GALICIA have been detained as a flight risk and a danger to the community. FRANCHESKA BRIZAN and HOWARD GORDON have been released on property bonds. The remaining defendants have not yet appeared in federal court in Fresno. The next district court appearance in this matter is scheduled before United States District Judge Anthony W. Ishii in Fresno on Monday, September 11, 2006.

The charges in the indictment are only allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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